

signifies the beginning of real progress, and I plan to work with my colleagues to develop a unified approach to address the challenges we face in Iraq.

Our soldiers in Iraq continue to do tremendous work and it is critical that we provide them with the resources they need to improve security. Unfortunately, the bill before us today would delay important troop-protection and equipment funds requested by the Pentagon. According to Department officials, delaying these funds would also force the Pentagon to begin borrowing from its regular defense budget, which in turn could impact important operating funds for troops and military bases.

Additionally, I am concerned that this legislation would condition troop funding on the initiation of an immediate redeployment from Iraq. Although I strongly support a responsible strategy for bringing U.S. troops home, these decisions should not be mandated by Members of Congress without close consultation with our military and foreign policy leaders in the field. Furthermore, the U.S. commander in Iraq, GEN David Petraeus, has already set forth a plan to bring home a full combat brigade this month and at least five brigades by July of next year. Congress should perform strong oversight with respect to the redeployment process, but placing restrictions on our military commanders is not helpful in their efforts to achieve stability and bring troops home.

Still, I support language in the bill that would improve accountability and increase transparency by requiring regular reports on the status of the military's redeployment plans. In the same way, I support sections of the bill that would ensure military units are properly trained and prepared for deployments. Embracing a comprehensive regional security plan and prohibiting torture are also key provisions which I continue to support. In fact, I recently cosponsored legislation identical to the anti-torture provisions included in H.R. 4156.

The leaders of the U.S. Senate have already made clear that this legislation does not have the votes necessary for passage and therefore many of these important provisions will be left on the table. Therefore, I call on my colleagues to embrace the substantive areas of this bill where we can find agreement, and join me in committing to a bipartisan approach for achieving stability.

Mr. Speaker, the Bipartisan Compact on Iraq Debate, of which I am an original author, identifies the areas where Democrats and Republicans have found agreement. Let us embrace these points of agreement and move forward in supporting our troops serving in combat.

#### H.R. 4183, TO ESTABLISH THE NATIONAL URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE RESPONSE SYSTEM

**HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 15, 2007

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Madam Speaker, last night I introduced H.R. 4183, a bill to authorize the National Urban Search and Rescue Response System.

The National Urban Search and Rescue Response System is an important part of our Na-

tion's all-hazards preparedness and response efforts. FEMA established the Urban Search and Rescue Response System in 1989 so that local emergency services personnel could act as integrated disaster response task forces. However, the system has never been fully authorized by Congress. As a result the Taskforces have suffered funding shortfalls, and the Taskforce personnel have been deployed without the appropriate Federal worker's compensation and employment protections.

Currently the Urban Search and Rescue Response System is made up of 28 Taskforces that are sponsored by local or State agencies. Most Taskforces consist of 70 personnel that are ready to deploy within 6 hours of activation, for 10-day deployments with 24-hour operations. The Taskforces deploy with all the equipment they need and they are self-sufficient for 72 hours.

In the event of a terrorist attack, a natural disaster, an accident, or another emergency involving structural collapse, FEMA can deploy any or all of the Taskforces to help with the emergency response. Taskforces have been deployed to respond to a variety of emergencies including earthquakes, hurricanes, and terrorism events like the Oklahoma City bombing. In 2001, 25 out of the 28 Taskforces were deployed to respond to 9/11. In 2005, all 28 Taskforces were deployed to respond to Hurricane Katrina. During that deployment the Taskforces searched thousands of collapsed structures in Mississippi and flooded structures in New Orleans, resulting in the rescue of 6,587 victims in New Orleans alone.

In my district the Orange County Fire Authority sponsors the fifth California Urban Search and Rescue Taskforce. The Orange County Fire Authority and the other sponsoring agencies make significant commitments to their Taskforces by absorbing Federal funding shortfalls, maintaining the necessary equipment, and supporting their personnel's participation in training, exercises, prestaging and deployments.

It is time for Congress to provide greater protections to the agencies that sponsor Urban Search and Rescue Taskforces and the individuals that serve on the Taskforces. H.R. 4183 will authorize \$52 million annually to ensure that sponsoring agencies are not forced to absorb a Federal funding shortfall. This legislation will also provide Taskforce personnel or their families with Federal injury, illness, disability, and death benefits if the Taskforce member is injured during a Federal deployment. In addition, this bill provides employment protections so that Taskforce members will not lose their jobs because they have been deployed by FEMA.

The National Urban Search and Rescue Taskforces are a valuable resource and an excellent example of how local, State and Federal Governments can cooperate to effectively prepare and respond to all-hazard emergencies. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting our Nation's Urban Search and Rescue Taskforces, and cosponsoring H.R. 4183.

HONORING THE LIFE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF AMERICAN WORLD WAR II VETERANS WHO FOUGHT IN GREECE

**HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 15, 2007

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary life and accomplishments of Andrew Mousalimas, Spiro Cappony, Greg Pahules, Charles Antinopoulos, Gus Kraras, Nicholas Pappas, Peter Photis, Angelus Lygizos, Theodore Russell, Spiros Taflambas, and Vic Miller. All of these distinguished gentlemen are American veterans of United States commando units, who served behind enemy lines and fought alongside Hellenic Armed Forces in occupied Greece during World War II.

World War II involved the first U.S. experience with clandestine commando warfare. Under a classified plan developed by the Office of Strategic Services, OSS, precursor of the CIA, small Operational Groups, OGs, of specially trained U.S. Army infantrymen of various ethnic backgrounds—Greek, Yugoslav, Italian, French, and Norwegian—were infiltrated into occupied Europe to assist local partisan groups in resisting the Nazis. Among these OGs were more than 200 bilingual American soldiers. Their mission was to work with the andartes, the Greek partisans, to make the Nazi withdrawal from Greece in 1944 as costly as possible.

At the time, the OGs' brand of warfare was unique in the history of American arms. They learned special commando tactics at the OSS's secret training center on the grounds of the Congressional Country Club in Chevy Chase, MD, and received demolition training at another clandestine facility in Hagerstown, MD. Beginning in April 1944, they were inserted by night into Greece from Italy, either by boat or air drop. They then walked through the mountains to their operational bases. Once in place, they could not expect reinforcements, tactical support, or medical aid. They had no withdrawal route and were expected to remain in Greece indefinitely, living off the land and moving around on foot.

They punched far above their numbers and succeeded far beyond expectations, making 76 deadly strikes against the withdrawing Germans, on average about once every 3 days, killing or wounding over 1,800 enemy soldiers and blowing up miles of roads, track, and bridges. Their effectiveness can be judged by the severity of the German response. Even though the OGs deployed in uniform, an illegal Wehrmacht order directed that they be slaughtered to the last man if captured. The OGs' presence was a great morale booster for the andartes. OGs were the close-assault troops in operations by Greek partisans and contributed greatly to their success against occupation forces.

With their mission completed, they were withdrawn from Greece at the end of 1944 and officially disbanded a year later. Records of their actions were sealed for 40 years. Having operated autonomously and formally under Allied command, their war record was not fully recognized, with U.S. Army separation papers often not mentioning ground combat in Greece. Some never learned that they had been awarded a Presidential unit citation.